



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 31, 2014

By Sgt. Edward Eagerton

Alaska Guardsmen return from Guantanamo Bay deployment

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Approximately 50 Soldiers with the Alaska Army National Guard's 761st Military Police Battalion returned home to various parts of Alaska Aug. 30, after a nine-month deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The Guardsmen deployed last November to Guantanamo Bay in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, Joint Detention Group.

"For our part of the mission in Guantanamo Bay, we were the brigade level staff," said Capt. Brian Fuchs, who served as the battle captain for the Joint Operations Center, 761st MP Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard. "We oversaw and managed direct care of the detainees and provided transparent, humane and just care for them."

As a brigade level staff, the Guardsmen were responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the JDG, and with that job came a high level of responsibility.

"We kept higher headquarters informed of any actions that were occurring at Guantanamo Bay on anything that involved the detainees," Fuchs said.

According to Fuchs, higher headquarters meant reporting all the way back to Washington D.C.

"The most impactful thing for me before coming into this mission was in knowing that all eyes were on Guantanamo Bay," said Staff Sgt. Joyce Dean, a military policeman with the 761st MP Battalion. "During my nine months there, I saw why the detainees are still there and got to see how the process works. It answered a lot of questions for me."

Fuchs, who works for the Anchorage Police Department as a police officer when he is not on duty with the Alaska Army National Guard, said he understands the complexity of the mission.

"People who haven't been involved in detainee operations don't know how much that entails, how much time is involved or that type of care for detainees," he said. "People don't see how complex, vital and how real that mission is on the ground. That's what took me back. This is the real deal. These are people who have been identified as terrorists, and we've been given a high level of authority to manage and care for them. To be successful at that mission at that level can be very taxing."

The staff worked an average of 10 to 12 hours a day, but because of the nature of the operation, were on call 24 hours a day, said Dean. Despite the long hours, the Guardsmen from the 761st MP Battalion received many accolades from other units working with them.

"I couldn't have asked for a better team," said Fuchs. "Over the last nine months, the 761st has been on point for the United States. We did it, we pulled off that mission, and that's a big deal when you're talking about the global war on terrorism. Alaska can be proud that their Guardsmen represented them well and I couldn't have been happier. I really appreciate everything they did for Alaska and the nation."

###

Cutlines:

140830-Z-CA180-025

Alaska Army National Guardsman Staff Sgt. Richard Murphy, 761st Military Police Battalion, hold his children, Sophia and Noah, after arriving at the Ted Stevens International Airport Aug. 30 following a nine-month deployment to Guantanamo Bay in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as part of Joint Task Force-GTMO Joint Detention Group. (U.S. Army Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)

140830-Z-CA180-029

Alaska Army National Guardsman Sgt. Brenda Sanchez-Veliz, 761st Military Police Battalion kisses her son, Cesar-Leonel, after arriving at the Ted Stevens International Airport Aug. 30 following a nine-month deployment to Guantanamo Bay in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as part of Joint Task Force-GTMO Joint Detention Group. (U.S. Army Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)

140830-Z-CA180-030

Alaska Army National Guardsman Spc. Bernardo Otero, 761st Military Police Battalion, takes a photo with his father, Raphael, after arriving at the Ted Stevens International Airport Aug. 30 following a nine-month deployment to Guantanamo Bay. Otero's father served in GTMO 40 years ago as U.S. Marine Corps lance corporal from 1974-1975. (U.S. Army Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)